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ABSTRACT

As part of a continuing study by home economists, in three contiguous New York State counties, of ways to identify and respond to the needs of low-income families, an interview-questionnaire was administered to 150 low-income homemakers who had children at home. The purposes of this data-collection technique were: (1) to identify some of the characteristics of low-income families; (2) to determine some of the homemaking practices and needs of low-income homemakers; (3) to discover what low-income homemakers consider as problems related to food and clothing; and (4) to suggest ways to respond to these problems. The data collected were analyzed by frequency distribution. Results of the study show that the primary concern of these homemakers is getting enough food for the money they have to expend; the same concern showed in clothing problems. A need for help with financial planning is clearly evident. Impressions of the families, as shown by interviewers' notes, are presented; these "word portraits" relate to family characteristics, health, income and money management, and housing and housekeeping. The resolution of these problems will require the efforts of other agencies, as well as Cooperative Extension. (CK)

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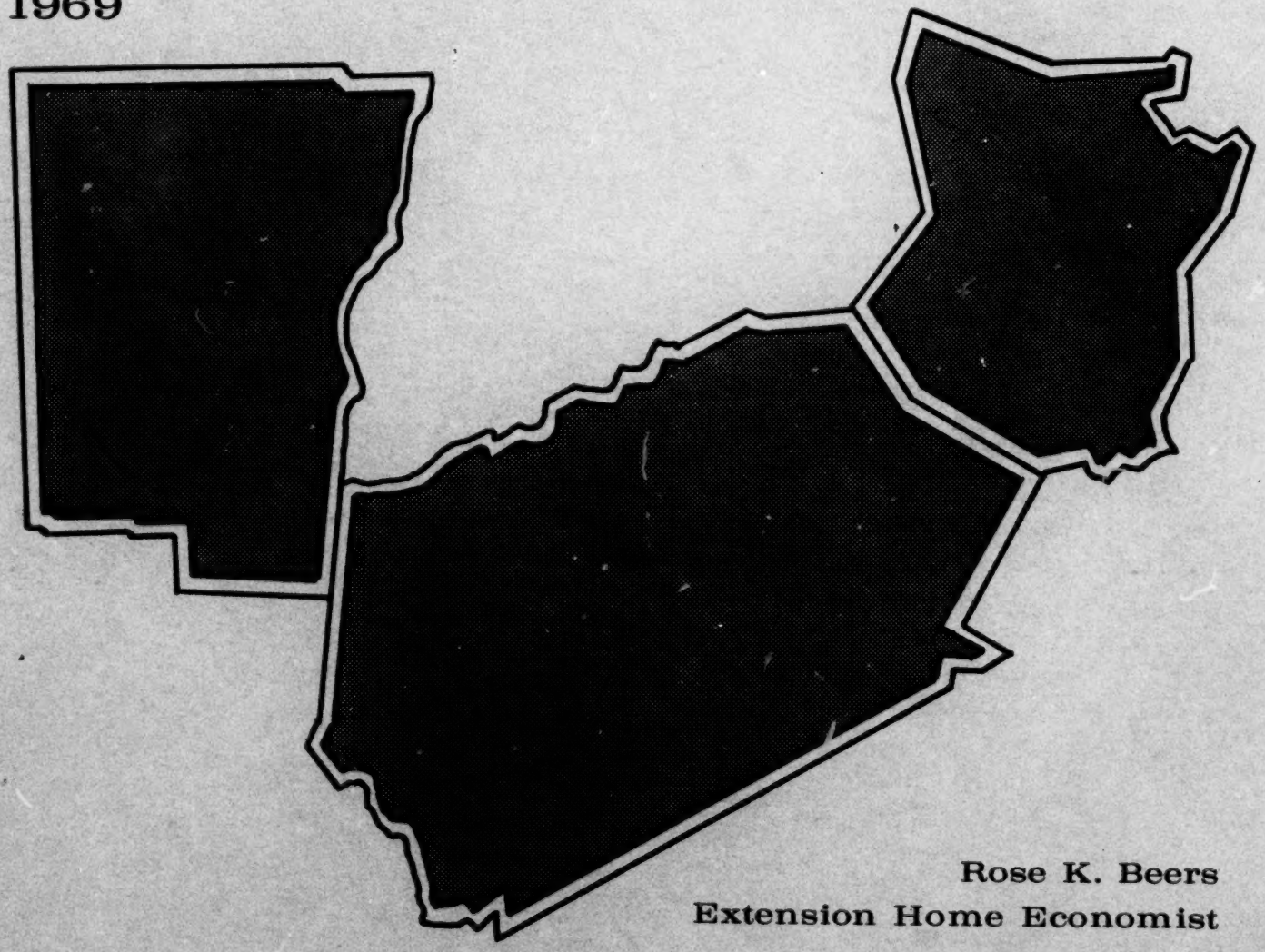
A STUDY OF SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS AND PRACTICES OF 150 LOW-INCOME HOMEMAKERS WITH CHILDREN IN CHENANGO, DELAWARE, AND SCHOHARIE COUNTIES

1969



Rose K. Beers
Extension Home Economist

DELAWARE COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION 1971

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1971

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Families to be interviewed were suggested by personnel from Opportunities for Chenango, Inc.; Delaware Opportunities, Inc.; Expanded Nutrition Education Program, Schoharie County Extension Association; school nurse teachers, guidance counselors and principals.

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INTRODUCTION

This study was undertaken as part of a continuing search by extension home economists in several contiguous counties--Chenango, Delaware, and Schoharie --for ways to identify and respond to the needs of low-income audiences.

The percent of low-income families in Chenango, Delaware, and Schoharie Counties is higher than the New York State average. Whereas 13.8 percent of New York State families had incomes under $3,000 in 1959, the percent of families at this income level was 21.3 in Chenango, 25.5 in Delaware, and 28.0 in Schoharie.*

The need to offer appropriate educational programs to low-income families has been a long-time concern of home economists in these counties. However, in order to develop meaningful programs, it was deemed desirable to investigate some of the practices and needs of this audience, and to determine whether similarities might exist that could be served by a coordinated program approach.

Rose Beers, Extension Home Economist in Delaware County, was authorized to investigate the needs of low-income homemakers in the area and to provide data that could suggest ways in which the home economics extension staff might provide relevant programs for these homemakers.

The study was conducted during the spring of 1969 through the use of an interview-questionnaire which was administered to 150 low-income homemakers with children at home. The purposes of this study are to: 1) identify some of the characteristics of low-income families; 2) determine some of the homemaking practices and needs of low-income homemakers; 3) discover what low-income homemakers consider as problems related to food and clothing; 4) suggest ways to respond to these problems.

The overall purpose of this study is to provide useful data upon which to base future program development for low-income audiences in the area including Chenango, Delaware, and Schoharie Counties.

*U.S. Census of Population: 1960, PC (1) - 34C, Table 86.

METHODOLOGY

A series of conferences with county Cooperative Extension staff, Cornell University faculty, State University of New York personnel from Albany and Delhi, and others including the staff of the Catskill Regional Center for Educational Development provided the guidance for this study. Frequent consultations with George Duncan, Chairman of the Construction Technology Division at Delhi Agricultural and Technical College, who conducted a survey of the educational needs of low-income youth in the same areas, also were valuable. These persons and many others who helped and supported this effort are mentioned in the acknowledgements.

After careful consideration, use of the interview-questionnaire approach was selected as an appropriate method for obtaining the desired information. Harold Feldman, Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, New York State College of Human Ecology at Cornell University, offered as a model a pretested interview device developed in conjunction with the College's Interdepartmental Research Group on Poverty.

A limited number of suitable questions were selected from this extensive document to provide the basis for an interview of approximately one-half hour. A few minor changes were made in the question format and a couple of items were added.

Since time, personnel, and funds were limited, obtaining interviewers and a sample of low-income homemakers posed problems. Volunteer interviewers were recruited and the assistance of paraprofessionals was offered. Through the efforts of approximately 30 interviewers, all of whom received training

at one of several scheduled sessions, the data for this study were provided. Referrals of families to be interviewed came from school nurse teachers in several communities, community action agencies in Chenango and Delaware Counties, and Cooperative Extension staff in Schoharie County.

No effort was made to select interviewers on the basis of place of residence --urban, rural, non-farm, or farm. The logistics of enlisting volunteer interviewers and interviewers from cooperating agencies would have been seriously complicated had such an effort been undertaken; the number of actual interviewers might have been decreased and the amount of time required to carry out the interviews increased.

Interviewers were invited to comment regarding each situation promptly after completing the interview. "Word Portraits" based on selected comments provided by interviewers in two counties supplement data from the questionnaire.

The information presented in this report was analyzed from the questionnaire data by frequency distribution. When percents are given, they have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

The total sample obtained is 150 homemakers: 61 from Chenango, 24 from Delaware, and 65 from Schoharie. The small sample in Delaware County was due primarily to lack of interviewers. Not every homemaker answered every question.

I. SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF 150 RESPONDENTS

Location, Ownership, and Types of Homes

The population of the three counties is predominately rural and the majority of the residents are rural non-farm. Table 1 describes the distribution of population in the area.*

TABLE 1

POPULATION OF CHENANGO, DELAWARE, AND SCHOHARIE COUNTIES BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE, 1960

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Urban	9,175	21	9,012	21	3,471	15
Rural farm	8,240	19	9,764	22	5,524	25
Rural non-farm	25,828	60	24,764	57	13,621	60
Total	43,243	100	43,540	100	22,616	100

*SOURCE: U.S. Census of Population: 1960, PC (1) - 34B, Table 27.

Place of Residence

No effort was made to match the place of residence of the study sample with that of the population of the three-county area. Whereas almost 80 percent of the total population are rural residents, approximately 60 percent of the sample interviewed were identified as rural and one-third as urban.

A larger percent of farm families were contacted in Chenango County than in Schoharie County; none were interviewed in Delaware County. The Delaware County sample was largely urban; in Chenango County, the urban sample was small. Schoharie County had the largest sample of rural non-farm residents. In Chenango County, the place of residence of 14 homemakers (23 percent of the county sample and 9 percent of the total sample) was not identified. Data are found in Table 2.

TABLE 2

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Urban	10	16	15	63	24	37	49	33
Rural farm	22	36	0	0	14	22	36	24
Rural non-farm	15	25	9	38	27	42	51	34
Not identified	14	23	0	0	0	0	14	9
Total	61	100	24	101	65	101	150	100

Residence History

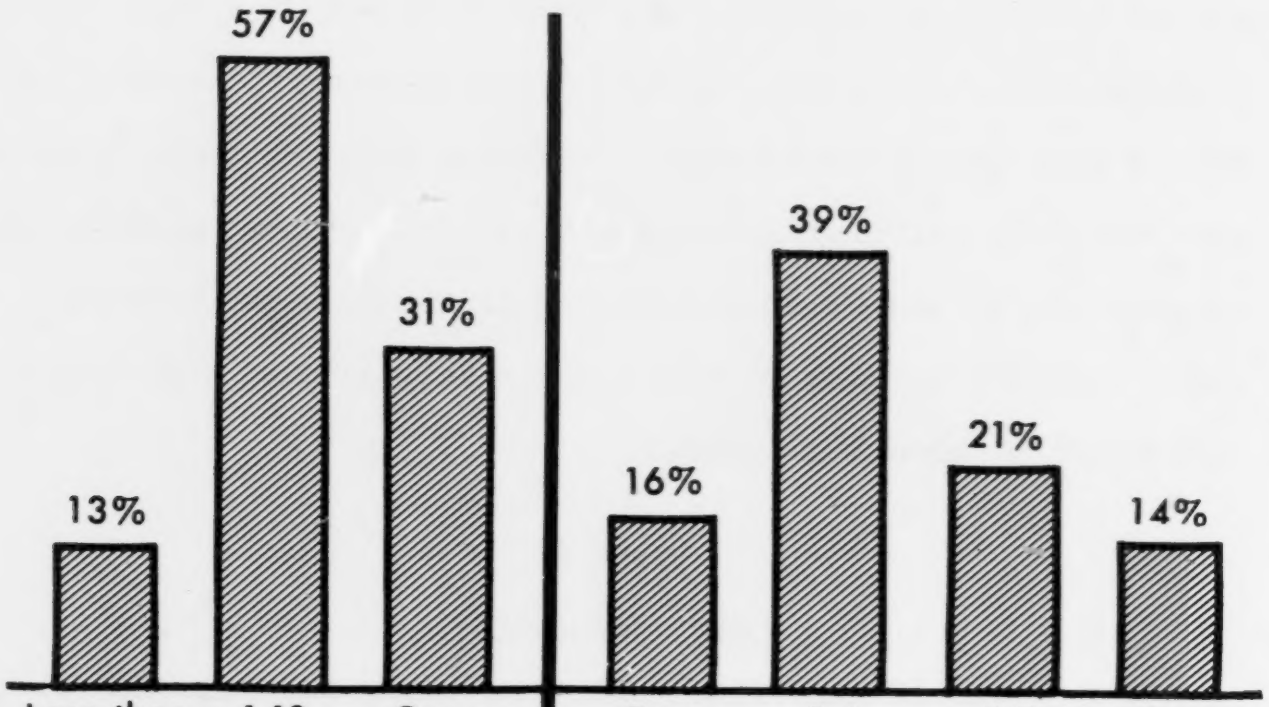
Over half of the respondents had remained in their present location between one and 10 years, and one-third had lived there over 10 years. However, they reported having moved quite frequently since marriage. One-third had moved five or more times since marriage. Schoharie County respondents had moved more frequently, although slightly more of them had lived in their present location over 10 years than was the case in the other two counties. Chenango County respondents appear to have been the least mobile. The data on residence history are in Table 3 and Chart A.

TABLE 3

RESIDENCE HISTORY

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Length of residence in present location								
Less than 1 year	4	7	3	13	12	18	19	13
1 to 10 years	41	67	14	58	30	46	85	57
Over 10 years	16	26	7	29	23	35	46	31
Frequency of moves since marriage								
Once or never	11	18	4	17	9	14	24	16
2 to 4 times	20	33	9	38	30	46	59	39
5 to 7 times	10	16	4	17	17	26	31	21
8 or more times	11	18	3	13	7	11	21	14
No response	9	15	4	15	2	3	15	10

Chart A RESIDENCE HISTORY OF RESPONDENTS



LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

FREQUENCY OF MOVES SINCE MARRIAGE

Note: 7% did not respond

Ownership, Rental, and Types of Homes

Over half of the respondents reported owning their own homes and one-third rented. Eleven percent reported that they neither owned nor rented but had some other arrangement.

Over two-thirds of the respondents lived in single-family dwellings, indicating that some were renting houses rather than apartments. One-fourth lived in multiple-family dwellings. Data on ownership and types of homes of the respondents are given in Tables 4 and 5 and Chart B.

TABLE 4

OWNERSHIP AND RENTAL OF HOMES

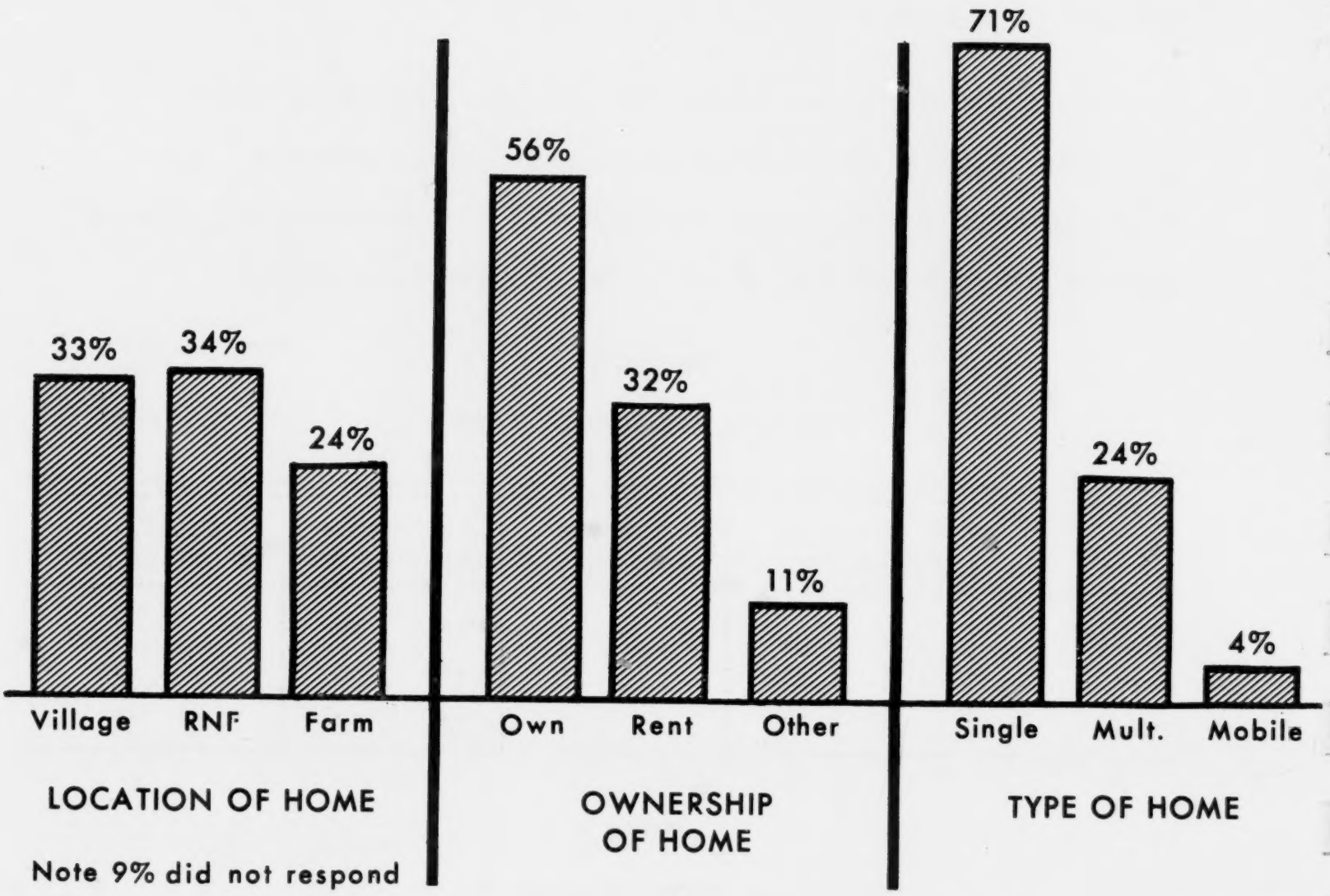
	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Own	29	48	15	63	40	62	84	56
Rent	26	43	9	38	13	20	48	32
Other	6	10	0	0	11	17	17	11

TABLE 5

TYPES OF HOMES

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single house	42	69	16	67	49	75	107	71
Multiple dwelling	15	25	8	33	13	20	36	24
Mobile home	4	7	0	0	2	3	6	4

Chart B LOCATION, OWNERSHIP AND TYPES OF HOMES OF RESPONDENTS



Note 9% did not respond

Characteristics of the Homes

Over half of the respondents had between four and seven rooms in use and over 40 percent had eight or more rooms in use. More than half of the houses with eight or more rooms in use were in Schoharie County. Table 6 and Chart C reflect these data.

TABLE 6

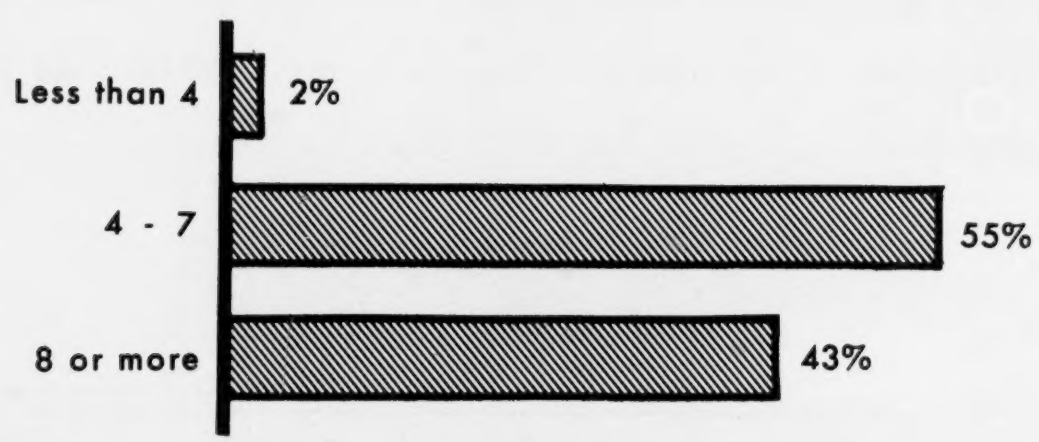
NUMBER OF ROOMS IN USE

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 4	2	3	0	0	1	2	3	2
4 - 7	36	60	17	70	29	45	82	55
8 or more	22	37	7	29	35	54	64	43

Facilities Reported

Sixty-seven percent of the households had central heating. Eighty-seven percent had a hot water heater, 90 percent had a tub or shower and a flush toilet, and 97 percent had running water piped into the house and a gas or electric stove. Ninety-nine percent had electric lighting and all of the respondents had either a gas or electric refrigerator. Ninety-six percent of the households also had television. Data appear on Chart D.

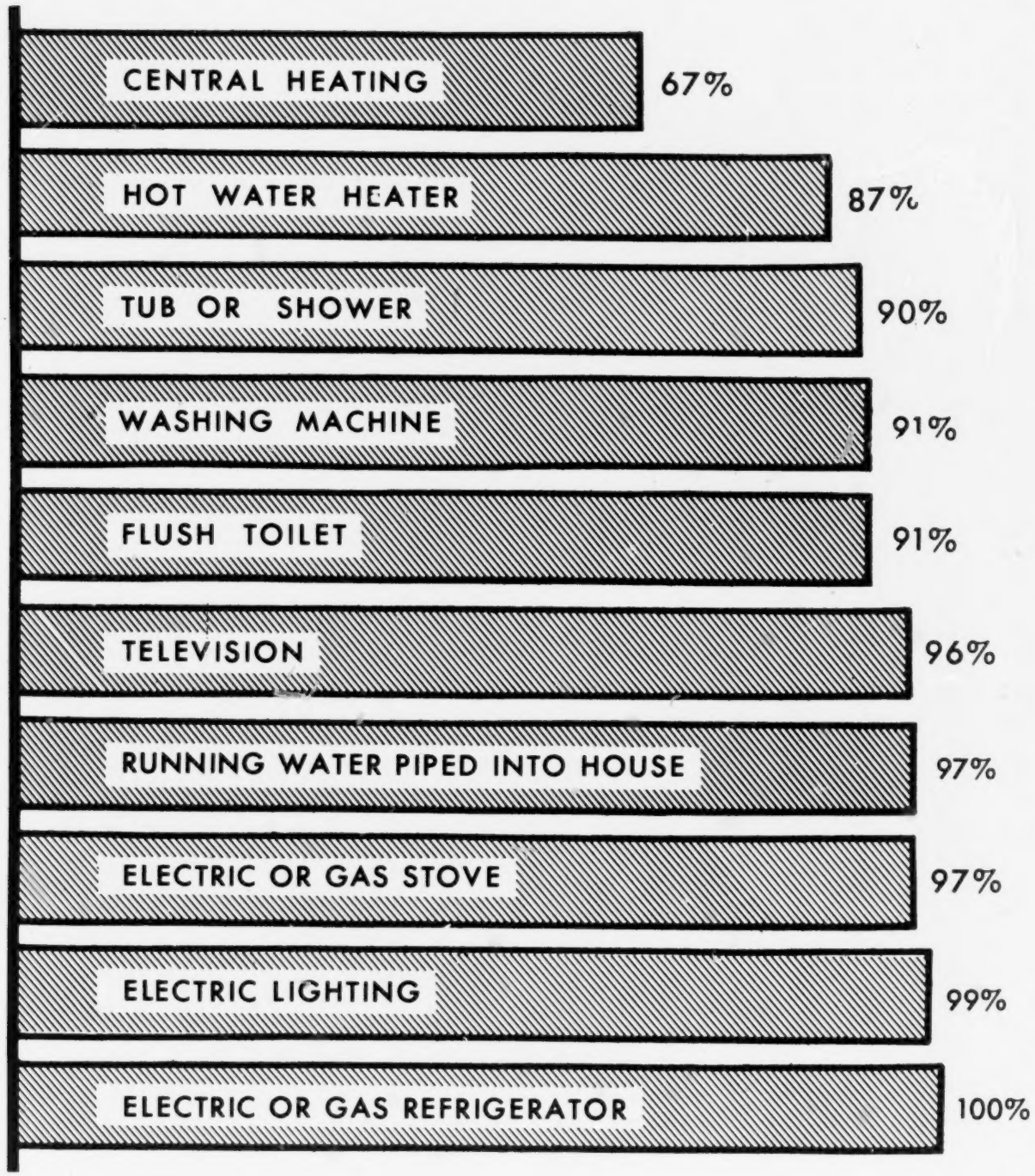
Chart C NUMBER OF ROOMS IN USE IN RESPONDENTS' HOMES



Note: 1% did not respond

17

Chart D FREQUENCY OF HOME FACILITIES REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS



Home Improvements Reported

When asked if they had made repairs or changes in their homes, half of the respondents (52 percent) said they had made major changes, like dividing or adding a room. Fifteen percent had made many repairs to maintain the house. Eleven percent had done nothing at all to the house.

Over half of the respondents (55 percent) had made things for the home, with 24 percent of them reporting they had often made things like curtains and chair covers. Thirty-nine percent had never made anything.

Age and Marital Status

Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of the respondents were less than 40 years old and 88 percent of them were under 50 years old. One-fourth of them were between 20 and 29, and one-fourth were between 40 and 49 years old.

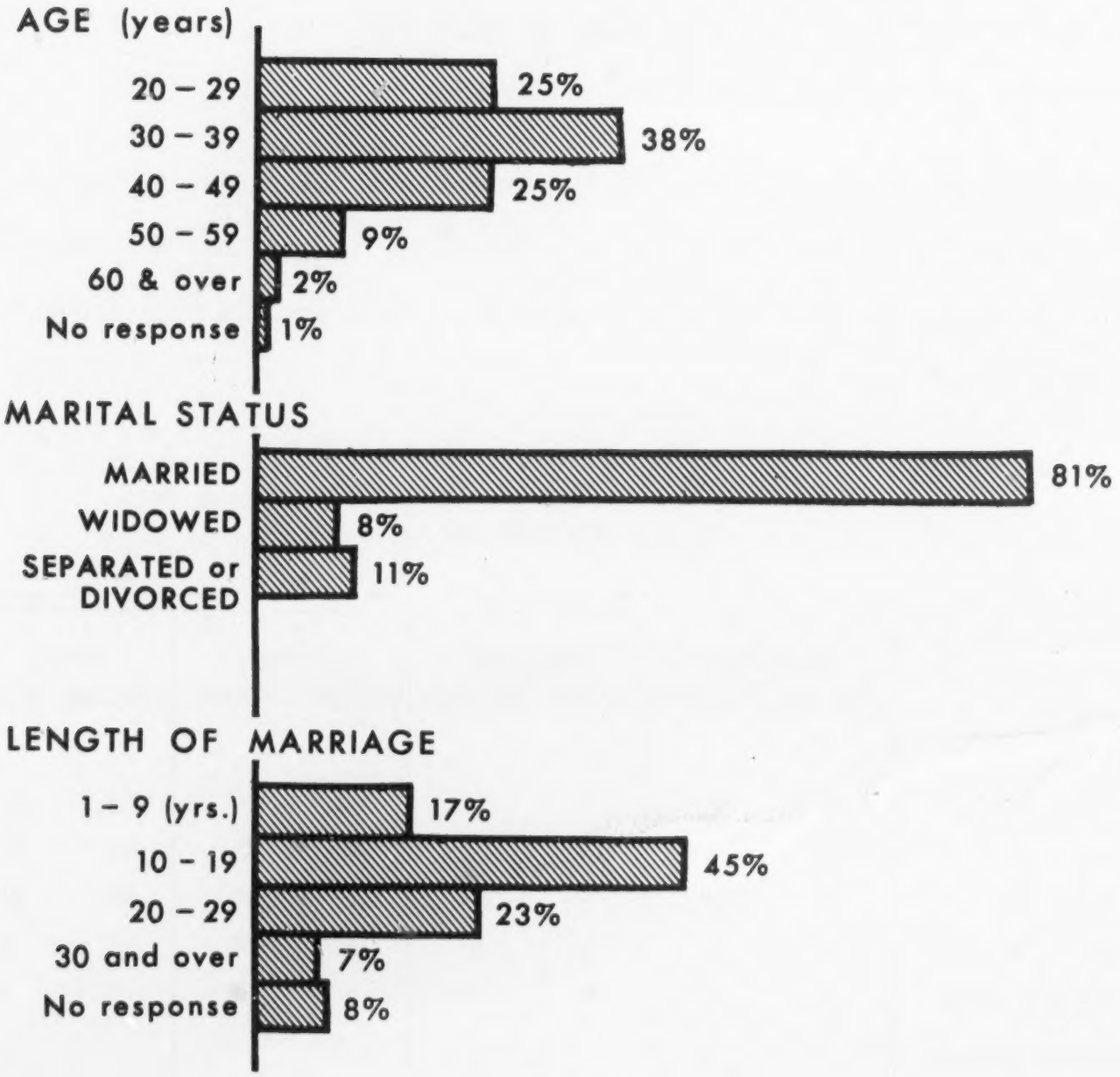
Eighty-one percent were married at the time of the interview; the others were widowed, separated, or divorced. Forty-five percent had been married 10 to 19 years; 28 percent had been married over 20 years. Data are presented in Table 7 and Chart E.

TABLE 7

AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Age								
20 - 29	14	23	7	29	17	26	38	25
30 - 39	23	38	8	33	26	40	57	38
40 - 49	17	28	5	21	16	25	38	25
50 - 59	7	11	1	4	5	8	13	9
60 and over	0	0	2	8	1	2	3	2
Marital status								
Married	48	79	18	75	56	86	122	81
Widowed	4	7	4	17	4	6	12	8
Separated or divorced	9	15	2	8	5	8	16	11
Length of marriage								
1 - 9 years	12	20	4	17	9	14	25	17
10 - 19 years	21	34	12	50	34	52	67	45
20 - 29 years	17	28	4	17	14	22	35	23
30 and over	3	5	3	13	5	8	11	7
No response	8	13	1	3	3	4	12	8

Chart E AGE AND MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS



Number of Children

As compared with the average population per household in each county in 1960, the respondents had larger than average families.* Two-thirds of them had four or more children and almost one-fourth had more than seven. Nine percent reported having nine or more children. For the 150 homemakers interviewed, 720 children were reported, an average number of 4.8 children per household.

Chenango County respondents had the highest average number of children, as well as the highest average population per household. The Schoharie County sample had the lowest average number of children, the smallest proportion of families with seven or more children, and the largest percent of families with one to three children. Families with seven or more children were reported by a larger percent of respondents in Delaware County than in the other counties. Tables 8 and 9 illustrate this comparison.

TABLE 8

FAMILIES AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY COUNTIES

	Number of Families	Number of Children
Chenango	61	310+
Delaware	24	118+
Schoharie	65	292+
Total	150	720+

*The average number of persons per household in 1960 was 3.40 in Chenango; 3.33 in Delaware, and 3.35 in Schoharie County. U.S. Census of Population: 1960, PC (1) - 34B, Tables 13, 28 and 29.

Number of Children (Cont'd.)

TABLE 9

NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Number of children per family						
1 - 3	17	28	7	29	25	38
4 - 6	28	46	9	38	29	45
7 or more	16	26	8	33	11	17
Average number of children	5.08		4.91		4.49	

Grades of Schooling Completed by 150 Respondents and 139 Husbands

Half of the respondents and 38 percent of their husbands were in school through grades 11 and 12.

Fewer of the husbands in the Delaware County sample were in school through grades 11 and 12 than was true in the other counties. In the Schoharie County sample, both the respondents and their husbands had stayed in school longer than those in the other counties.

Two percent of the respondents and 4 percent of their husbands went beyond grade 12.

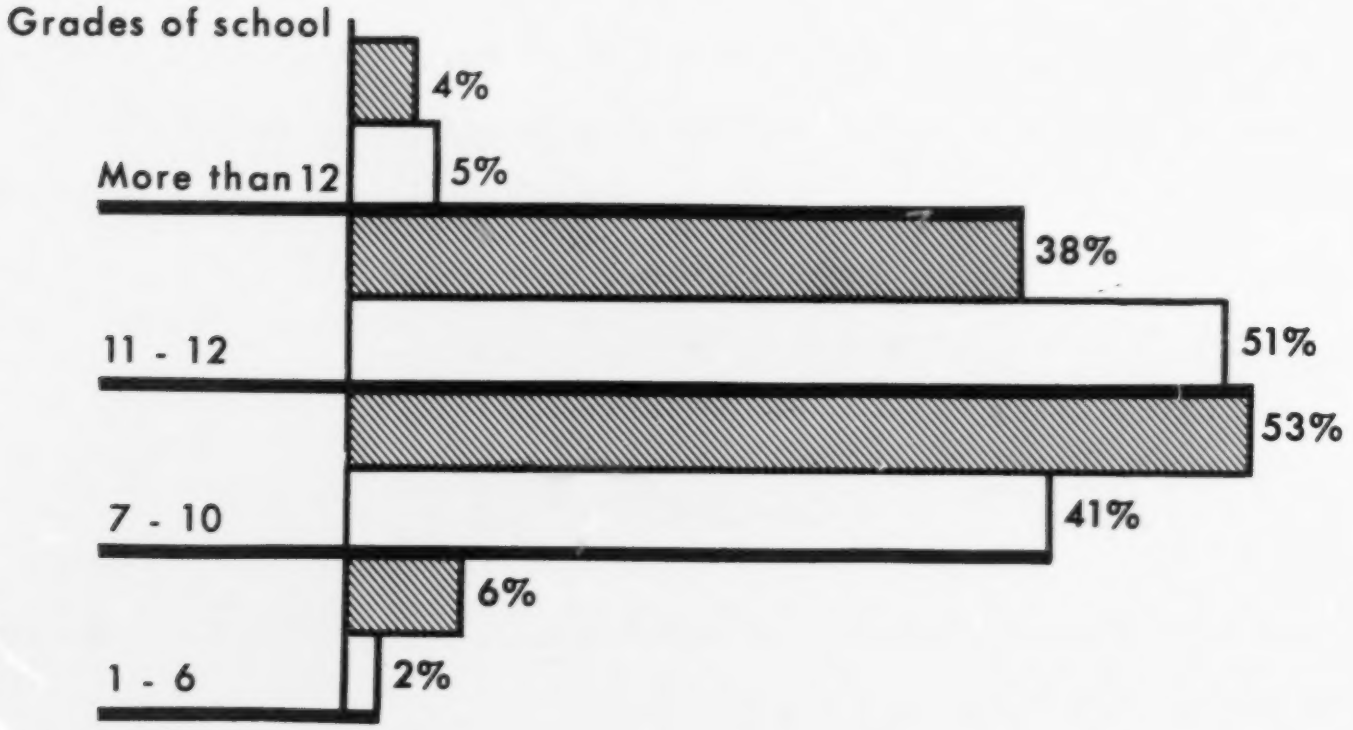
More of them had gone beyond grade 12 in Schoharie County than in Chenango County; in Delaware County no one reported going beyond grade 12. Data are in Table 10 and Chart F.

TABLE 10

GRADES OF SCHOOLING COMPLETED BY
150 RESPONDENTS AND 139 HUSBANDS

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Wife (Percent)	Husband (Percent)	Wife (Percent)	Husband (Percent)	Wife (Percent)	Husband (Percent)	Wife (Percent)	Husband (Percent)
Grades of school								
1 - 6	0	6	4	8	3	5	2	6
7 - 10	50	52	50	70	31	46	41	53
11 - 12	48	39	46	21	57	44	51	38
Over 12	3	4	0	0	9	5	5	4

Chart F GRADES OF SCHOOLING OF 150 RESPONDENTS AND 139 HUSBANDS



Current Employment Reported by the Respondents for Themselves and 128 Husbands

Approximately half of the respondents reported that they were employed, either full or part time. Eighty-seven percent of the 128 husbands from whom responses were given were currently employed.

Delaware County respondents were more likely to be employed part time than full time. Chenango County had the fewest respondents working, but the majority of those employed had full-time jobs. Table 11 shows the employment picture.

TABLE 11

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT REPORTED BY THE
RESPONDENTS FOR THEMSELVES AND 128 HUSBANDS

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Homemakers employed	27	44	14	59	32	49	73	49
Full time	19	31	4	17	17	26	40	27
Part time	8	13	10	42	15	23	33	22
Husbands employed*	45	92	15	92	51	88	111	87

*Number of husbands reported in each county - Chenango - 49; Delaware - 22; Schoharie - 57.

Car Ownership and Use

Over half of the respondents had a car that they could drive. An additional one-fourth reported owning cars but were unable to drive. Nineteen percent had no car. Details are given in Table 12.

TABLE 12

CAR OWNERSHIP AND USE

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Had car and drive	28	46	14	58	39	60	81	54
Had car but unable to drive	22	36	5	21	13	20	40	27
Had no car	11	18	5	21	13	20	29	19

Frequency of Having Friends Visit

Most of the respondents frequently had friends visit their homes. Two-thirds reported having friends visit from at least once a week to almost daily. Nine percent reported they hardly ever had friends visit them. Table 13 provides data on visits.

TABLE 13

FREQUENCY OF HAVING FRIENDS VISIT

	Chenango		Delaware		Schoharie		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Hardly ever	5	8	3	13	5	8	13	9
Less than once a week	15	25	4	17	15	23	34	23
At least once a week	30	50	10	42	16	25	56	37
Almost daily	11	18	7	29	29	45	47	31

Some Community Participation Patterns

Several questions were included in the interview schedule to obtain some indications of the respondents' involvement in their communities. These questions concerned voting patterns, membership in religious groups and other organizations, and library use.

More than two-thirds of the respondents reported being registered and voting in state and national elections. However, not quite half voted in local elections and about one-third voted in school elections.

Church membership was reported by 64 percent; membership in other organizations by 27 percent. In Delaware County, the proportion belonging to either church or other organizations was smaller than the other counties.

Less than one-third reported having a library card and two-thirds reported they had not visited a library during the past month. Fourteen percent reported from one to nine visits during that period. Data on participation patterns are compiled in Table 14.

TABLE 14

SOME COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

	Chenango (Percent)	Delaware (Percent)	Schoharie (Percent)	Total (Percent)
Voting Patterns				
Registered	66	54	74	67
Vote in:				
School elections	44	25	23	32
Local elections	51	38	49	48
State and national elections	67	67	75	71
Membership				
Belong to:				
Church	74	46	62	64
Other organizations	23	8	38	27
Library Use				
Have library card	31	33	26	29

II. SELECTED FOOD AND CLOTHING PRACTICES

The preceding section describes some of the characteristics of the low-income families represented by the sample; this section describes some of the practices and problems of the respondents related to feeding and clothing their families.

Some Food Shopping Practices

Forty-five percent of the respondents reported shopping for food once a week. One-fourth shopped once or twice weekly and 23 percent shopped three or more times a week.

Seventy-five percent of the sample shopped at supermarkets and 22 percent shopped at both supermarkets and small neighborhood stores.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents reported choosing stores where food was less expensive; 44 percent selected "convenient" stores and 11 percent, stores within walking distance. Seven percent chose a store where they could get credit.

One-half of the sample said they never send children for groceries. Nineteen percent sent them once or twice a month, 18 percent once or twice a week and 11 percent about every day. Of those who sent the children shopping, 72 percent gave their children an exact list of purchases to make, 23 percent suggested kinds of things to get and 5 percent instructed them to "just get something for dinner." These data are shown in Table 15.

TABLE 15

SOME FOOD SHOPPING PRACTICES OF 150 HOMEMAKERS

	Percent
A. Frequency of shopping trips	
Once a week	45
Once or twice weekly	25
Three or more times weekly	23
B. Stores where groceries usually purchased	
Supermarkets	75
Both supermarket and small neighborhood stores	22
Small neighborhood stores	2
C. Reasons given for choice of stores	
Less expensive	69
Convenient	44
Can walk there	11
Can get credit	7
D. Frequency of sending children for groceries	
Never	50
Once or twice a month	19
Once or twice a week	18
About every day	11
E. Instructions given to children who shop (74 respondents)	
Exact list	72
Kinds of things to get	23
"Get something for dinner"	5

Food Selection Practices of 142 Respondents

Each respondent was asked to list all of the things she had to eat and drink the day before the interview without indicating amounts.

The foods reported by the respondents were classified according to the Basic Four Food Groups: breads and cereals, meats or meat alternates, fruits and vegetables, and milk and milk products. Coffee and tea also were reported by most of the respondents.

The bread and cereal group was included by 100 percent of the sample in Chenango and Delaware Counties; 94 percent included it in Schoharie County where the meat group took priority in 98 percent of the cases.

The Schoharie County sample also ranked the fruit and vegetable group 86 percent higher than either of the other two samples. It had the lowest percent using milk (56 percent) and the smallest percent that included at least one serving of all four groups.

Chenango County had the highest percent using milk (80 percent). Delaware County had the lowest percent using fruits and vegetables (75 percent).

None of the groups was included by all of the respondents. Table 16 illustrates these slight differences.

TABLE 16

FOOD GROUPS INCLUDED IN DAY'S INTAKE REPORTED
BY 142 RESPONDENTS

	Chenango (Percent)	Delaware (Percent)	Schoharie (Percent)	Total (Percent)
Breads and cereals	100	100	94	97
Meats and meat alternates	95	95	98	96
Fruits and vegetables	85	75	86	84
Milk and milk products	80	75	56	68
All four groups	63	60	44	54

At least one serving of bread or other cereal product was reported on 97 percent of the records. Meat or a meat alternate, such as peanut butter, baked beans, and eggs was reported in 96 percent of the cases. When a meat alternate was reported, it was usually in addition to meat. Less than 7 percent of the respondents reported having had no meat or meat alternate at all.

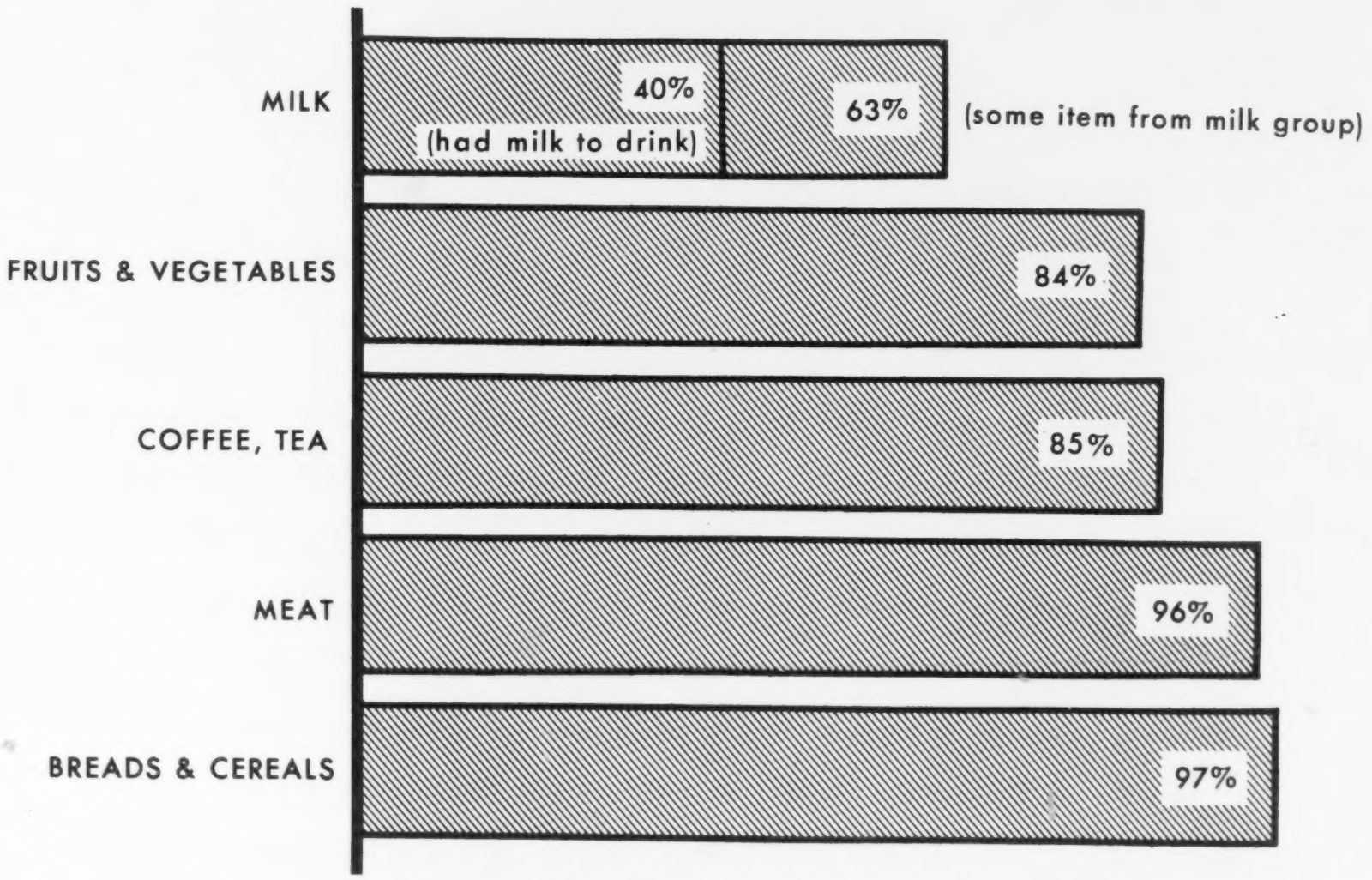
On 84 percent of the records, at least one fruit or vegetable was reported. Potatoes (other than chips) were most frequently used; 50 percent of the respondents reported having eaten potatoes. Both a fruit and a vegetable were reported in 36 percent of the cases. Fourteen different fruits and 19 different vegetables were listed.

Determining the number of times fluid milk was reported in the diets could be accomplished quite accurately, whereas it was more difficult to determine the use of some other items in the milk group. It appears that about 68 percent of the respondents probably used some item of the milk group. However, in 17 percent of the cases this was milk on cereal only. Some type of cheese was used in about 16 percent of the cases and ice cream was reported in about 12 percent of the cases. Less than half of the sample (40 percent) reported having had milk to drink. Milk used in coffee or tea was not counted.

Coffee and tea were reported by 85 percent of the respondents. These beverages were reported twice as often as was milk to drink. Other beverages, primarily soft drinks, were reported in 12 percent of the cases; alcoholic beverages were reported by four percent.

This information is presented on Chart G.

Chart G FREQUENCY OF USING ITEMS FROM THE BASIC FOUR FOOD GROUPS AND COFFEE OR TEA, AS REPORTED BY 142 RESPONDENTS



Some Problems in Feeding the Family

The most common problem mentioned by the respondents, related to feeding the family, was getting enough food for their money. Three-fourths reported this as a frequent problem and 45 percent considered it the greatest problem they had.

Although 43 percent said they almost never needed more food money before the next paycheck, 28 percent said they often or almost always did and 27 percent said they sometimes did. More than half of the sample have faced this problem at some time and 16 percent of the group saw no particular way out. The remainder reported they either ate cheaper foods (27 percent), set money aside (9 percent), or charged or borrowed (7 percent).

Other problems that the respondents identified in feeding their families included: providing foods the family needs, knowing new ways to prepare foods, deciding what foods to have, criticizing of food by the family and getting children to eat proper foods. However, these and other problems were judged to be much less critical than getting enough food for the money. This information appears in Table 17.

TABLE 17

SOME PROBLEMS IN FEEDING THE FAMILY

	Percent
A. Frequency of needing food money before next check	
Almost never	43
Sometimes	27
More often than not	16
Almost always	12
B. Methods of solving this problem	
Not a problem	33
No response	15
Eat cheaper foods	20
No particular way - worry	16
Set money aside	9
Borrow or charge	7
C. Frequency of some other food problems	
Getting enough food for the money	74
Providing food the family needs	39
Knowing new ways to prepare foods	39
Deciding what food to have	39
Criticizing of food by family	37
Getting children to eat proper foods	34
Having room to store food	26
Preparing foods for special conditions	19
Having time to prepare food	17
Having time to buy food	14
D. Problems judged most critical (125 respondents)	
Getting enough food for the money	45
Getting children to eat proper foods	9
Criticizing of food by family	6
Providing foods the family needs	5
Knowing new ways to prepare foods	5
Having time to buy food	3
Preparing foods for special conditions	3
Deciding what foods to have	3
Having room to store food	1

Some Family Clothing Practices

One-half of the sample reported they receive clothing for their families from friends and relatives. This was the largest single source of clothing reported.

About one-third of the respondents reported purchasing clothing from each of the following sources - discount stores, local stores, mail order catalogs, and out-of-town stores. Over one-tenth of the respondents obtained clothing from used clothing shops or variety stores. Home sewn garments also were listed. Refer to Chart H.

One-half of the sample reported that they buy clothing when they need it for themselves and their families. Twenty percent reported they wait until things are on sale. These data appear in Table 18.

TABLE 18

SOURCES OF FAMILY CLOTHING AND TIMING OF PURCHASES

	Percent
Sources of clothing	
Friends and relatives	51
Discount houses	39
Local stores	36
Mail order catalogs	32
Out-of-town stores	31
Used clothing shops	13
Variety stores	11
Other	10
When clothing is purchased	
When needed	51
When on sale	20
When they see something nice	3

Chart H SOURCES OF CLOTHING THE FAMILY

Some Family Clothing Practices (Cont'd.)

A series of items related to making clothes at home revealed that two-thirds of the respondents had sewing machines that worked and 63 percent liked to make things for themselves and their children. Half of them said they only sewed when simple repairs were needed.

The degree of sewing skill reported varied: 64 percent were able to alter clothes; 60 percent were able to make simple garments; 24 percent were able to make clothes for other people. About one-fourth reported having trouble choosing patterns and material. Data on home sewing practices are contained in Table 19.

TABLE 19

HOME SEWING PRACTICES

	Percent
Have a sewing machine that works	67
Can sew well enough to alter clothes	64
Like to make things for self and children	63
Can sew well enough to make simple garments	60
Sew only when simple repairs are needed	50
Can sew well enough to make clothes for other people	24
Have trouble choosing patterns and material	24

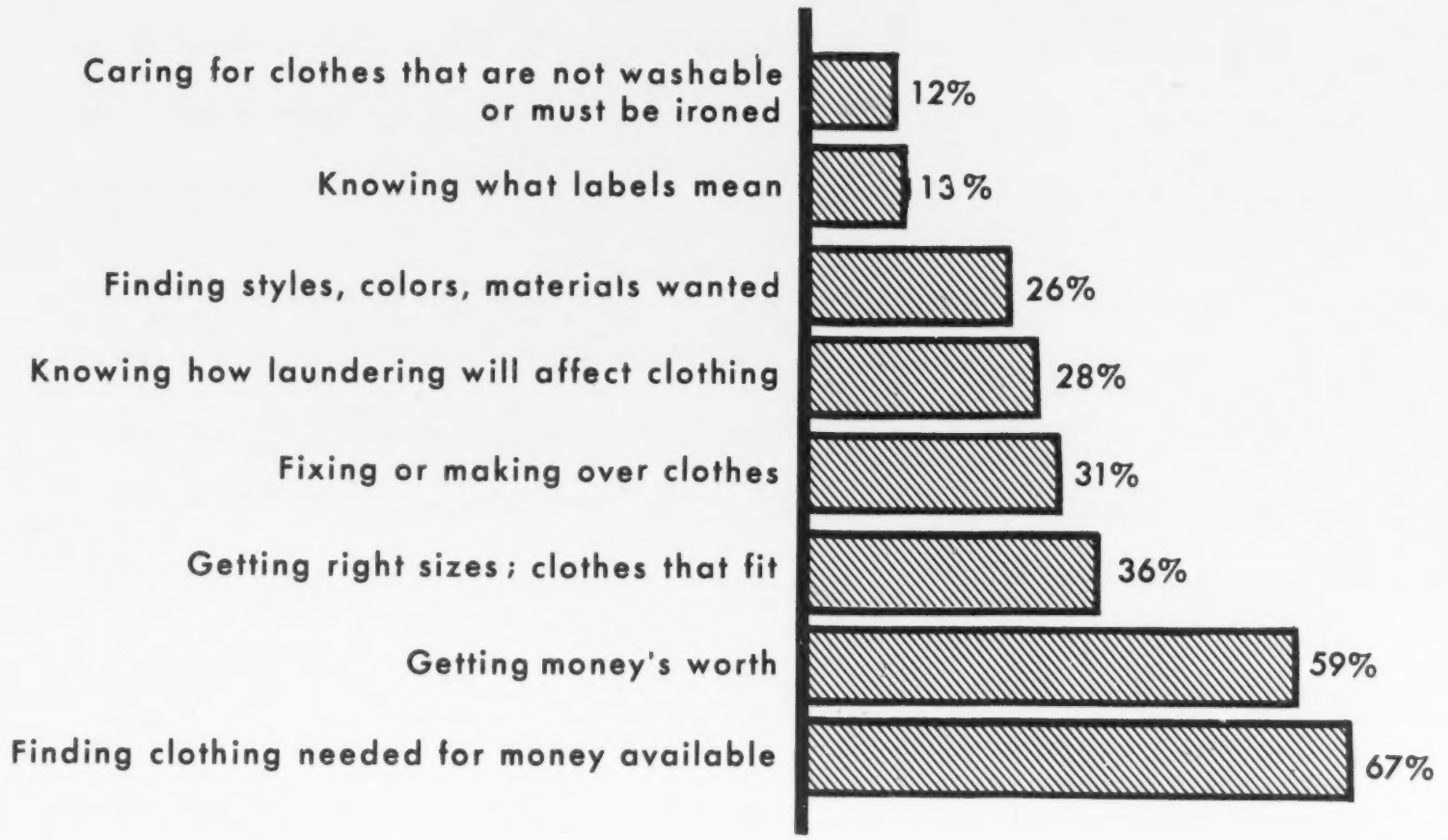
Over half of the respondents indicated an interest in learning more about sewing: 56 percent for their own pleasure; 64 percent to save money; 13 percent for the possibility of getting a job.

Some Problems in Clothing the Family

The respondents reported a number of problems related to clothing themselves and their families. The most frequently mentioned problems were related to money: 67 percent reported having a problem finding what they needed for the money they had to spend; 59 percent had trouble getting their money's worth.

About one-third had difficulty getting the right sizes or finding clothes that fit and in fixing or making over clothing. About one-fourth did not know how laundering would affect clothing and the same proportion had trouble finding desired styles, colors, and materials. Frequency of these and other problems is shown on Chart I.

Chart I SOME PROBLEMS IN CLOTHING THE FAMILY



III. SOME PROBLEMS AND METHODS OF SOLVING THEM

The respondents were asked to indicate which family need posed the greatest problem for them - food, clothing, or housing. Food was mentioned by 44 percent, twice as often as either of the others. Clothing or housing were considered the most critical problem by 21 percent and 17 percent, respectively.

When asked to judge which method for trying to solve their problems was best, the respondents indicated more than one method as being appropriate. Over half of the respondents said they would get information about the problem from books, magazines, extension pamphlets, or newspapers. More than one-third said they would ask a close friend about it or attend classes on the subject.

Differences in methods of problem-solving selected in relation to the needs of food, clothing, or housing were slight. However, a larger proportion of respondents indicated they would solve their food problems through reading than was true for either clothing or housing. Frequency of choosing methods for solving problems is tabulated in Table 20.

TABLE 20

METHODS SELECTED FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS
WITH FOOD, CLOTHING, AND HOUSING

	Percent
Get information from books, etc.	58
Ask a relative or friend	40
Join a class of neighbors	40
Start a group like this yourself	10
Attend classes	39
Get information from television or radio	29
Complain to the right people	15
No use to do anything	15
Other	6

IV. PARTICIPATION AND INTEREST IN LEARNING

Attendance in Classes

Although less than 10 percent of the respondents or their husbands were attending classes at the time of the interviewing, 37 percent reported that either they or their husbands had attended some class in the past. Table 21 shows these percents.

The respondents had been involved in a variety of classes including both home living and job-related topics. The husbands usually had been involved in classes that could improve their job skills. Fifty-one different classes had been attended by the respondents and 30 by the husbands. As many reported having attended classes in Schoharie County as did in the other two counties combined.

TABLE 21

ATTENDANCE IN CLASSES

	YES	NO
	Percent	
Currently		
149 respondents	9	91
136 husbands	1	99
Previously		
145 respondents or husbands	37	63

Topics of Interest ..

The respondents were presented with a list of topics related to helping the family live better and job training and asked to indicate which ones would interest them.

Of those suggested to improve family living, 75 percent wanted to know how to save money buying food; about two-thirds expressed interest in learning to cook new food dishes and how to handle money better; over half said they would like to learn about understanding children better and about painting and decorating their homes.

Sixty-five percent said they would be interested in receiving a monthly newsletter of homemaking ideas if they could subscribe for a small amount, such as $1.00.

No more than one-third of the respondents indicated interest in any item listed that might help in getting a job. About one-third were interested in learning how to be a nursery school aide and the same proportion in how to be a nurse's aide. Almost one-fourth said they would like to learn about each of these--being a companion to elderly people, doing sewing and tailoring, and being a secretary. The three topics that received the highest rating were related to helping others.

Frequency of indicating interest in these topics is shown in Table 22.

Topics of Interest (Cont'd.)

TABLE 22

TOPICS OF INTEREST

	Percent
Improved family living	
Saving money on food	75
Cooking new food dishes	67
Handling money better	63
Understanding children better	59
Painting and decorating the home	57
Making handicrafts (knitting, weaving, etc.)	49
Grooming	45
General high school diploma	19
Interest in Monthly Newsletter of Homemaking Ideas (139 respondents)	65
Job Training	
Nursery school aide	33
Nurse's aide	31
Companion to elderly	24
Sewing and tailoring	23
Secretary	20
Hairdressing and beauty culture	18
Waitress	16
Short-order cooking	9
Salesmanship	8

Topics of Interest (Cont'd.)

When asked which of the job-related topics they would like to learn about most, the 98 who responded rated them as follows: 24 percent - sewing and tailoring; 21 percent - nurse's aide; 15 percent - nursery school aide; 14 percent - secretary; 10 percent - companion to elderly and hairdressing and beauty culture; 3 percent - salesmanship; 1 percent - waitress; and none - short-order cooking.

Learning Situations Preferred

The respondents were asked to indicate some of their preferences regarding nature of the group training of the teacher and meeting place if the topic they preferred were offered nearby. Although fewer respondents answered this group of questions than was true of others, some definite preferences were indicated.

Over half of them preferred a small group but did not care whether they were with people they knew or not. Almost two-thirds felt the topic should be taught by a trained teacher. One-third thought a central place in the neighborhood, such as a fire hall or town hall, would be a good place for the group to meet. These and other data on learning situations are given in Table 23.

TABLE 23

LEARNING SITUATIONS PREFERRED

	Percent
Size of group	
Small	52
Large	4
Does not matter	25
Individual instruction	3
With people known	
Yes	25
No	5
Does not matter	55
Background of teacher	
Trained teacher	64
Friend with training	9
Respondent with training	7
Meeting place	
Central place in neighborhood, such as fire hall	34
School in neighborhood	17
Move around to members' homes	11
Local church	8
Central place, not in neighborhood	4
Help from respondent	
Help with refreshments	29
Get people to come	14
Be a teacher aide	7
Teach such a group	3
Extent of professional help	
Teach group	29
Supervise program	18
Train homemakers to teach	14
Not be involved	1

V. SUMMARY

The data on the characteristics of the respondents support several generalizations:

1. More of the respondents were rural than were urban residents. Whereas some of them had moved quite frequently, some had lived at their current location several years.

2. The majority of the respondents lived in single-family dwellings, many of which were large. Over half of them owned their home. Few lived in trailers.

3. The homes were less likely to have central heat and hot water than other facilities. Many changes and repairs had been made in the homes and many things made for the homes.

4. Most of the respondents were currently married and had been for 10 or more years. The majority of them were less than 40 years old, still in their child-bearing years, and had larger than average families.

5. The respondents had completed more grades of schooling than had their husbands, many of whom were not in school through grades 11 and 12. Few had gone beyond 12 grades.

6. Most of the husbands were employed and almost one-half of the respondents were also working, either full or part time.

7. Half of the respondents had a car they could drive.

8. The majority of the respondents frequently had friends visit their homes. They also received the interviewers well.

9. The majority of the respondents were registered voters and church members. Less participation was indicated in elections at the local level, in membership in community organizations and in library use.

10. A variety of problems were present within the study sample as evidenced by the interviewers' comments. Of these, circumstances that indicated need for medical services were noted most frequently. Poor housekeeping practices were more often noted than was poor housing.

Data on the food and clothing practices of the respondents may be summarized as follows:

1. Most of the respondents shopped once or twice a week, usually at supermarkets. Less expensive prices was the most important factor affecting their choice of stores.

2. Half of the respondents never sent their children for groceries; those who did usually gave them an exact list.

3. Milk and milk products was the food group most frequently absent from the diets of the respondents. Most of them had at least one serving from each of the other food groups but nearly half did not include a serving from all four.

Breads and cereals was the food group most frequently included in the diets, followed by meats and meat alternates, fruits and vegetables, and milk and milk products.

The majority of the respondents used coffee and tea. These were the beverages used twice as often as was milk.

4. In the opinion of the respondents, the most frequent and greatest problem they had in feeding the family was getting enough food for the money. Half of them had faced the problem of running out of money for food before the next check. Many of them indicated several other problems that were of concern although they were less critical.

5. The greatest single source of clothing for the respondents and their families was gifts from friends or relatives. They bought things when they needed them more often than they bought at sales or on impulse. They were more likely to buy clothes at discount stores, local or out-of-town stores, and from mail order catalogs than at used clothing shops, variety stores or other outlets.

6. The most frequently reported problems of the respondents in clothing the family were finding the items they needed for the money they had and getting their money's worth. Several other problems were of less concern.

7. The majority of the respondents had a sewing machine that worked, liked to sew, and were able to make simple garments or repairs. Many of them indicated an interest in learning more about sewing in order to save money as well as saving for personal pleasure.

8. Twice as many respondents said that they had more trouble with problems related to food than with problems of either clothing or housing.

9. Over half of them said they would try to get information about the problem by reading. Many also said they would seek advice from friends or relatives and attend classes to learn about it.

Data on the attitudes of the respondents toward education reveals that:

1. Over one-third of the respondents or the husbands had participated in classes.

2. The respondents expressed greater interest in classes related to improving family living than to job training. Interest in job-training topics was greater for those topics concerned with helping others, e.g., nursery school aide.

3. A majority of the respondents prefer a learning situation with a small group and a trained teacher. One-third of the respondents selected a central location in the neighborhood as the preferred meeting place.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAMS

Problems

Low-income homemakers readily identified basic problems regarding food, housing, and clothing. Their response regarding the methods they would use for solving these problems suggests appropriate approaches to explore:

1. Food was considered the greatest problem by the respondents; specifically, they expressed concern about getting enough food for the money. As long as the trend of rising food prices continues, this concern is likely to intensify. Several other concerns in relation to feeding the family also were reported.

   An educational program directed toward the felt needs of this audience could begin with food buying. It could be broadened to encompass the range of other food problems expressed, as guided by the participants. Nutrition, including weight control information, could be incorporated as an integral part of the learning experience.

2. Although clothing problems were considered serious by a smaller number of respondents, greatest concern again centered around getting the clothing needed for the available money. A buymanship approach to clothing the family appears equally appropriate as the starting point

of an educational program. Selection of ready-made clothing, alteration of ready-mades, clothing construction and care appear to be areas of significant concern.

Laundering procedure in the absence of hot water is an appropriate topic for some homemakers.

3. Since providing for the family's needs with the money available is a common thread of concern in both feeding and clothing the family, a program on money management might evolve from either of these efforts. The frequency of running out of food money and buying clothing when needed indicates a need for help with financial planning.

Other problems that the respondents were not asked to discuss are reflected in the comments of the interviewers (see Appendix).

1. The proportion of large homes, some without hot water, and large families and the number of comments on poor housekeeping practices indicate need for home management information. Whether this need is more acute for the working homemaker or for those with other pressures remains to be explored.

2. The number of comments revealing health problems imply that these frequently may be a financial burden and that committed spending for health care may require a

large share of the income. The extent of public support for health care for the respondents mentioning problems is not known. Investigation of the provision of health care facilities and leadership in identifying the nature of the need may be an appropriate role for future efforts. The large number of children reported indicates the likelihood of need for family planning, counseling, and facilities.

Approaches

Learning from printed information and in groups both appear to have potential. In the rural setting printed materials might reach a large number of people more economically than other means of reaching them. Consideration should be given to the educational attainment of the group on the development of such materials. Possibilities might include offering a newsletter or special letter series, study packets, and simplified correspondence courses.

A number of the respondents expressed interest in small group meetings located in a central place in the community. They favored having a trained teacher to lead these groups. A combination of teaching by professionals, well-trained aides, and volunteers who work closely with the professionals might be feasible. Provision for transportation and child care might be necessary. Probably both day and evening meetings should be offered.

At the time this study was initiated, the Schoharie County Cooperative Extension Association was participating in the Expanded Nutrition Education Program.

Since then, the other two counties also are involved in this program. In all three counties, the nutrition aides have helped low-income families with their food problems, housekeeping, sanitation, distribution of gifts of clothing, and awareness of resources available from other agencies. The aides also have identified needs where they were unable to give adequate assistance - e.g., health, mental retardation, transportation, and financial problems. The resolution of these problems will require the efforts of other agencies as well as Cooperative Extension. Extension personnel can take educational leadership in calling these needs to the public's attention.

A P P E N D I X

WORD PORTRAITS

Selected Comments from the Interviewers

The interviewers were encouraged to jot down a few notes indicating their feelings and experiences with the families as soon as possible after interviewing the homemakers.

It was suggested that they might comment on the condition of the house, the way they were received, and any special problems or conditions noticed.

The comments included here were selected from those made by the interviewers in Chenango and Delaware Counties. They indicate some of the situations and problems that existed within the sample. The comments relate to how the interviewers were received, family characteristics, health, income and money management, and housing and housekeeping.

Reception

Some of the interviewers were previously acquainted with the families and some were not. In over one-third of the cases, they were received well enough to make a positive comment. Some examples follow:

...was well received.

I was greeted nicely.

We were very well received by both husband and wife. The husband offered us coffee which we accepted.

Mrs. _____ was cooperative and quite intelligent.

Mrs. _____ was very talkative and pleasant.

These people were very friendly and glad to cooperate.

...met me in the yard.

She welcomed me most graciously. Her husband, who works nights, was also home and got a kick out of the whole thing.

I liked Mrs. _____.

Family Characteristics

The families who were interviewed had a range of problems and strengths.

Selected comments of interviewers follow:

She was so nice with the children. Seemed to be a good mother and a nice person.

Two families live here together in all. Daughter does grocery shopping so she answered these questions.

The boy and girl were quite ill-mannered. The mother seemed to ignore them.

Mrs. _____ doesn't have much education and lays most of her troubles on this fact.

Mrs. _____ is a widow and not able to do much around the outside in the way of repairs and upkeep.

Family Characteristics (Cont'd.)

Mrs. _____ is on welfare and her husband deserted her two years ago.

She seemed to lack interest in anything, especially concerning sewing and learning more about food and nutrition.

Mrs. _____, herself, though cooperative, seemed tired, a bit sloppy, and almost totally without ambition.

There are problems. Too many children too fast.

Mrs. _____ and daughters are strong church people.

Mrs. _____ is pleasant to talk with, would be interested in homemaker groups if she was not busy at home caring for grandchildren or family.

This young woman seems happy with her family, but I think she feels confined because her husband does almost all the shopping and doesn't encourage her to learn to drive. He handles all the money. She would like to work and have money of her own after the two youngest children are in school.

I asked her if she would be interested in sitting on the board of directors of _____ and she said she would like something like this very much.

She is very active in her church, helping with _____, Bible School, small functions, and attending all services and events. And other than her church, Mrs. _____ does not appear to want involvement in any other kind of group activity. At least not yet, while she still has children at home.

Mrs. _____ has been an active member of Cooperative Extension for many years.

She would like to sew more but has no time. Doesn't have time for anything but her children and job. She is interested in some classes but would probably be unable to attend as she is bogged down with so much to do just to exist and keep the family going.

Mrs. _____ and children are cheerful, talkative, and satisfied with life.

It was a very pleasant interview with a young mother of four young close-spaced children.

Mrs. _____ has raised 12 children, nine of her own and three stepchildren. There are only seven at home now.

Family Characteristics (Cont'd.)

Two of her three children are retarded and attend special classes.

There were latent ambitions there for a career as a nurse's aide or companion to the elderly, but they were well-buried under the weight of caring for five children and trying to make a small paycheck stretch for all their needs.

The children were neat and well-mannered. Both husband and wife were neat.

Mrs. _____ was most cooperative. She's eager but with 12 kids (nine still at home) she's kept pretty busy at home.

Oldest daughter does not seem to be quite up to par mentally.

Health

In more than one-fourth of the 67 cases, medical attention was needed or significant health problems were identified:

Mrs. _____ claims ill health, is seriously overweight and expects to enter the hospital soon.

Her husband is sick and she talked to me at my car.

A diabetic child and one with a torn ligament that was going to require an operation added to her worries. But I think she was doing as well as anyone would with the small amount of money she had to spend.

Because of health and one blind eye, Mr. _____ is unemployed.

...an obese woman.

Mr. _____ spends a good part of his time in the hospital.

She is pregnant again.

These two children and herself, she says, have a weight problem.

Her husband has skin cancer--has to go once or twice a week for x-ray treatments.

Income and Money Management

The extent to which money is a problem and how the families coped with financial conditions varied:

Family is on welfare and seems to manage fairly well although money is very tight.

...Food and clothing present major problems to this family.

Don't know where the money comes from for complete remodeling of house, lots of new clothes for husband, and new color TV.

Money didn't seem to be any problem here. They have a car, truck camper and travel quite a lot weekends.

Husband drinks most of paycheck up when he works.

I got the impression that they weren't too hard up. She seemed to think she could handle money but you could only manage to stretch the money so far no matter how well you shop.

Her husband had been laid off work and had just got a new job out of town. They feel the pinch of little money.

Mrs. _____ is working at a nursing home and would like to take training for practical nursing.

Because she works usually full time, she did not think she'd have time for any kind of organizations.

...He obviously does not make much helping with haying. Nor can she make much helping in the kitchens.

...He can only work part time periodically. Has cancer.

Housing and Housekeeping

The adequacy of housing and the upkeep of it, both inside and out, was noted for one-third of the cases:

Housing was the greatest concern - four rooms for a family of six is rather meager.

Theirs was a duplex home but now renovated to form one family unit. They have done extensive renovations.

House is in need of painting, remodeling, and some repair. Would imagine it is somewhat crowded for everyone. Furniture is old--crowds some rooms, while more could be in others. Family satisfied with it though.

The _____ family are living in rather wretched conditions. Not much can be done, I'd say, to improve this house, although Mrs. _____ says that they are "remodeling constantly."

Has sold the house to the upstairs tenant and is looking for an apartment.

Exterior of the home in very poor condition. Looks in need of paint and repair.

The house was clean but in bad shape.

She talked about the problem of housing. No one will rent to children. They have been asked to move since the baby was born--three children are not allowed. They plan to make a down payment on a trailer.

Yard cluttered with junk type items.

Interior sparsely furnished - old - but very clean and very neat.

She was cleaning her stove and was really very sloppy. The baby was soaked when I got there and still hadn't been changed when I left. The house was very dirty and cluttered.

Really not interested in housekeeping. Told me she takes life as it comes, really can't change anything.

Interior extremely cluttered but not dirty. Furniture old but all in one piece. Main impression was the clutter--tabletops, chairs, sofa, etc., all covered with odds and ends.

Housekeeping was obviously a problem for her.

...Their house is very nicely kept.

This is not a very appealing home from the outside nor is it inside.

Toys etc. all over the yard, uncovered cesspool was smelly, home in very poor condition.

House is neat.

Conditions of home good.

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